

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. (Maximum of 50 lines for response)

Our high school district consists of three large, regional high schools with similar constituencies. Therefore, it is necessary to offer the same programs at each school. In the area of foreign languages, that is sometimes difficult due to small class size and the availability of certified personnel. Russian is an example of such a language.

In our constantly shrinking world, we believe that it is important for our students to begin to develop the ability to communicate with people speaking a variety of different languages. We already have programs in place for French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish. Our objective was to offer Russian as well. In addition to that, we want our students to gain a general education and to develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Further, we want to integrate a number of other disciplines, such as history, art, music, and sociology, into the study of a foreign language.

To meet these objectives, we initiated an in-district Russian I program that is broadcast via ITV (Interactive Television) to all three schools simultaneously. This is innovative in a number of ways. First, the broadcasts are scheduled as a regular part of the school day and fit in with the bell schedules. The teacher is located at one of the schools and is part of the staff there. However, she routinely visits the other two schools at the end of the day to work with any class members who might need extra help. The ITV room in each building is equipped with cameras, monitors, microphones, a fax machine and special overhead projectors and chalkboards. In this way, students at all three schools can be called upon to recite and can be heard as if the sending teacher were right in front of them. The classes in the receiving schools are supervised by a facilitator whose responsibilities include monitoring attendance and distributing and collecting materials. Although the originating teacher is fully certified to teach Russian, the facilitators need not be. In that way technology is innovatively applied to the instructional program; one teacher can present a lesson simultaneously in three different buildings, get immediate responses from the students, and provide a program that would not otherwise be possible.

We have found that the Russian program promotes high student achievement in a number of ways. As with any other foreign language, it is an Honors elective; students who take the course have chosen to do so. Beyond that, however, is the positive impact of technology. Students are very comfortable with the mechanical aspects of the room itself. For them, seeing the teacher and some of their classmates on a television screen carries with it an element of entertainment, to which they respond positively. In addition, they enjoy seeing themselves on screen. Because the students are being televised, they are motivated to be prepared and to perform to the best of their abilities. One more factor that promotes student achievement is class size. Although the total enrollment for the program is larger, class size in some of the schools may be as small as two to six. This would be hard to justify budgetarily in any one school. However, by combining classes, we are able to give students the opportunity to take the course while having the advantages of a small group. Students automatically find themselves in study groups and work cooperatively with each other. Although the Russian language is more challenging for Americans than many other languages, the teacher consistently reinforces high expectations by communicating the message, "I know you can learn this."

Our district has a distinct advantage because it became involved with instructional technology several years ago. However, this program could be replicated in other high schools without great difficulty. Grant money is available from a number of sources to offset the cost of ITV equipment. Many businesses are increasingly interested in developing partnerships with schools and offer a source of additional funding. If these are not viable means of providing the technology, another alternative is to make use of existing VCR's and classroom television sets. Although this would not have the advantage of immediate feedback, taping the teacher in one school and sending copies of that tape to other schools in the district would enable the entire district to offer an additional program with limited staff funding and small class size.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addressed and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). (Maximum of 50 lines for response)

The need for a Russian program in our district was communicated in a number of ways. Several years ago, our district participated in a SERC program (satellite education) through which we were able to offer Russian for the first time. This taste of the language generated an interest that continued even after the SERC program was no longer available to us. At least one of the churches in the community sponsored several Russian immigrant families, which stimulated additional interest in the culture. We participated in a teacher-exchange and hosted a Russian teacher for a few weeks, which gave many students an opportunity to relate personally to the language and culture. As a result of this combination of factors, students began speaking to their guidance counselors and petitioning the course. Parents called the foreign languages supervisor to request that Russian be included as part of our program of studies. As a final impetus, the State department of Education mandated that, in order to graduate from high school, students must be able to "comprehend fluent speakers of another language in everyday situations, demonstrate an understanding of different aesthetic philosophies, write a research paper that synthesizes and cites data, analyze the successes and failures of various economic systems, present an extemporaneous speech, provide and receive constructive criticism, and recognize verbal and nonverbal cues within another culture." The Russian program was proposed to address those needs.

The Russian I course addresses both of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* for world languages. The students learn to communicate at a basic literacy level by becoming familiar with the alphabet, practicing the pronunciation of and incorporating new vocabulary, learning common phrases and conversational idioms, creating and presenting dialogues using the target language, and reading short passages in Russian. These activities successfully incorporate all of the language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. To further aid students in learning to comprehend aurally a difficult language, each member of the class has a set of tapes to use independently. In addition, the students gain an understanding of the interrelationship between language and culture through a variety of activities. This cultural understanding is a major part of the course. A supplemental text, *This is Russia*, includes information about such topics as education and family life in Russia. Field trips to such places as the Nicholas and Alexandra exhibit recently in Wilmington, DE, give students a feeling for the history and art of the country. In addition, the teacher has included guest speakers to talk about their lives in Russia, special events to recognize Russian holidays, and a dinner featuring Russian foods.

Many of the cross-content workplace readiness standards are also addressed by this course. For example, the students certainly demonstrate employable skills, such as getting along with others and being dependable as part of their career preparation. The organization of the ITV room itself helps students become more familiar with technology. They are also required to complete research assignments that may involve use of the Internet. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are incorporated within the daily lesson plans. Both independently and in small groups, the students must define problems regarding short and long-term assignments, formulate questions, investigate relationships, interpret information, and monitor their own thinking. Integrating some of the material in this course with other classes, such as European History, further stimulates critical thinking. Common experiences and assignments are planned cooperatively by the teachers. In fulfilling the objectives of this course, students must apply study skills, work cooperatively, give and receive constructive criticism, and use time efficiently, all of which are self-management skills. Evidence of this can be found in lesson/unit plans and evaluation documents.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. (Maximum of 60 lines for response)

In an attempt to assess the extent to which the objectives of the Russian I course have been met, the district and department have employed strategies to evaluate both the course itself and the pupil progress. Indicators of pupil progress listed in the class record book include tests of vocabulary knowledge, scores on dictations, and cumulative tests requiring writing. Alternative types of assessment are also employed. Original skits presented in Russian by the students are scored using rubrics. Students keep vocabulary lists and class notes in a fashion similar to portfolios. Both individual and group projects are also required. In terms of performance assessment, the accuracy and level of use of the target language are evaluated daily through class participation. Although specific grades may not appear in the grade book, workplace readiness standards are reinforced in classroom expectations, such as preparedness and self-management. Grades are calculated every four weeks, and report cards are sent home at eight-week intervals. The class average at the end of the first marking period this year was 3.7, with two percent of the students earning B's and the rest A's.

One of the early issues in planning this course was the pace. Since Russian has a different alphabet, it is probably more difficult in some ways than any of the other modern languages we teach. Nevertheless, we decided to use the same measures for pacing this course as we do for French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Generally, we consider two years of high school study as the equivalent of one year of the college course. By continuing at our current pace, we will meet that goal. A cumulative written and oral exam is created by the district and administered at the end of each semester. An item analysis of the test results allows us to reteach information that may need review. It also gives us an opportunity to be sure that the questions are clearly stated and appropriate. This covers all of the material in the portion of the text required for each time period.

Means of assessment for the course itself are incorporated within the course of study. In preparing that document, we phrased each objective to incorporate one of the critical thinking levels of Bloom's taxonomy. A specific evaluation tool, as well as suggested activities, are matched with each of the course objectives. Students create alphabet books that show their mastery of the Russian alphabet. The students' ability to respond appropriately to statements and/or questions in the target language is measured by their success in formulating appropriate rejoinders. Original skits reflect the extent to which students are able to synthesize the grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These are presented in both written and oral forms. Examining Russian folk tales helps student infer facts about the culture. Further evidence of the success of the course is the enthusiasm the students have for continuing into Russian II. On a district level, specific data regarding each of the assessment items described above is collected and analyzed every two years to determine the extent to which we are actually achieving the objectives which we have set out. Based on that data, adjustments can be made in the instructional strategies, assessment tools, and/or course requirements.